

"Only A Mouthpiece!"

Text: Micah 3:11,12,

"Her heads judge for reward, and her priests teach for hire, and her prophets
vine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord
among us, No evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be
plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the
house as the high places of the forest."

Scripture: Matthew 23:13-33.

If I were to ask you, "What is a Pharisee?", most of you would answer
they were men who observed the law. Some of you would probably say that
they were men who were disliked and distrusted by Jesus and His followers.
Both answers are correct. But, we should first of all state in fairness to
them that the Pharisees were the most religious people who ever lived. If
the strict adherence to rules and regulations and laws were salvation, then
the Pharisees would be the first in the kingdom. Their problem was they
became overzealous to interpret the letter of the law. Here is where they
came into conflict with Jesus Christ. We read as our Scripture a scorching
attack upon these men, and how they were leading many to be doomed to hell,
simply because ~~they~~ of their interpretation of the law.

But the really strange thing about all of this is that approximately 8
centuries before this a man stood before the leaders as well as the people
of Israel, and condemned them for the very same things. Naturally he did
not use the same language or speak out as authoritatively as Jesus, but his
message was similar, and he was speaking for God.

The mans name was Micah, and his message, ~~xxxxxx~~ is to be found in 7
short chapters in the book named after him. The portion that I am making
reference to this morning is found in the 3rd chapter and ~~xxx~~ using the
11th and the 12th verses. We read there, (read text).

What Micah was saying was that it was money and not principle that guided
the leaders in their dealings. He is referring to judges accepting bribes
and forvruling in favor of those who could pay them the most. The priests
he takes to task because they cater to those who can influence them the most.
~~xxxxpriestxwasxpaidxbyxxomex~~ A priest was the keeper of the sacred law,
and it was also his duty to ~~xxxxxx~~ reveal it to the people through his words

as well as by his life. The prophets were attacked by Micah because of the practice of prophesying for money. In other words if a person came and gave them a certain sum of money, then the prophet would prophecy good things for that person, not speaking the truth as God would reveal it through the prophet, but speaking what that person paid to hear. The art of divining was similar to that of fortunetelling. Those who divined told the future by casting lots, or observing flights of birds or some other things. It would be sort of like the amusing ways we tell it will be a hard ~~winter~~ or easy winter by the stripes on the woolly worm, or by how early the birds head South or some of the other things we use as guides. But these people did not do it out of amusement, but for money.

And to compound the problem Micah points out, they do all of this under the guise of being religious, and having the continued protection of God. "Yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord among us. No evil can come upon us." So Micah confronts this group of leaders with their shameless and mercenary ways, and he passes a sweeping judgement on them ~~all~~ and on all their works. He says, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."

He is telling them that Zion, which is another term for Jerusalem, will be destroyed. This prophet has the nerve to stand forth and shout that their beloved national shrine is to be completely and utterly destroyed. That it was to become just like plowed ground. All of their homes and things they own and hold dear. And most of all this an affront to even think of such dire circumstances for this is the City of David and the home of their beloved Temple.

One of the oft repeated assurance of the priesthood and of the prophets, that Zion would not be destroyed. God might punish the people for their sins and rain his wrath upon them, but He would never destroy His Temple. The religious leaders ~~to~~ almost to a man, were certain that Jerusalem would

never be destroyed. Somehow or other God would intervene and not let this happen. So you can imagine how well received this bit of news was from this prophet.

But Micah pointed out in his words, "For your sake." Because of you, this is going to happen. You are bringing it about. Because of you this must come to pass. Picture if you will how these people must have felt when hearing this distressing news. As they looked about them at the beautiful buildings and wonderful city, with its magnificent temple with its stately columns and pillars, its courts and its altars, and all of this was going to be reduced to rubble. Could anyone bear this burden to even think of such wanton destruction? But we do know that in 586 BC the city and the Temple were burned. Thus Micah's prophecy did come true. But even with all of this history behind them, you would think that the Jewish people would have learned from experience. ~~But we see that in the time of Christ, a few centuries later, the same problems prevail among them.~~ So it is not surprising that in the time of Jesus He was lashing out at the same kind of thinking and the same kind of people. But one need not stop there, we only need look at our age and our times and we can see that we are still surrounded by these kinds of people.

In our nation today we see that the sins of our larger cities as well as the sins of our smaller cities have increased by a large percentage. The crime rate is up, immorality is rampant, and in general sin is raging on all sides. What a challenge that is set before the Christian in today's world, to speak out against the sin and corruption just as Jesus and Micah did. We cannot overcome sin and degeneracy by remaining mute. We need instead to become "Mouthpieces" as it were for God. What is a "Mouthpiece?" There are several definitions. But the one I like is the definition that is used as slang. A "Mouthpiece according to this definition is a lawyer, or one who stands and pleads another's case. Micah pleaded God's case to the people. Jesus pleaded God's case to the people also.

that is
In musical circles a "Mouthpiece" is an object ~~when~~ placed on the end of an instrument, ^{when} and the instrument is played it helps to bring forth beautiful music. But if the "Mouthpiece" is just lying on a shelf or table, it is just that, "Only A Mouthpiece." There is one other "Mouthpiece" that we refer to in life, and that is the ~~"Mouthpiece"~~ slang term we apply to a lawyer. A "Mouthpiece" in this case is one who pleads the cause of another. And this is what we as Christians are to be and do. We are to be "mouthpieces" of God. This is what Micah was, and all the other prophets. We are to be prophets, not so much in the sense as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Micah and the others. But to be Mouthpieces in that we speak out and for God.

The hue and cry in our nation today is, "What is wrong with our nation?" What has happened to our leaders? Where are we to turn? " The answers to all of these questions remain with each of us undividually. If we do not like what is going on, and I think we can all agree we do not, then we must speak out and be heard. But again people ask, "What can one person do?"

(Illustration of man who braved the arena pg 86 Barclay, Matthew vol 2)

Not many or perhaps any of us may ever have this kind of opportunity to make changes in the world. But a reformation or revival of any kind, begins with just one man. Someone must start it. It can begin in a ~~home~~ private home, or where an individual works. But if one man or woman starts it, no one can ever know where it will end. A ~~group~~ mother in Charleston West Virginia questioned the textbooks this year that are authorized by the school board as required reading in the school. One mother against a school board. Changes are being instituted in the system there. Perhaps we need to question what is being taught in our schools here, to see if perhaps there are influences being exerted on our children that should not be exerted. We can speak out by writing our president and our congressmen to let them know how we feel about some of the irresponsible things that are going on. ~~This is how we~~ ^{We can also speak out by voting .} ~~can be "Mouthpieces" and be effective ones~~ The black comedian Dick Gregory says, "We can decide not to be controlled by a few degenerate men," and he

Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA
NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST OCTOBER 13, 1974
REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. MARILYN STEPHENSON, ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR
SHARI McBRIDE, ELLEN MASTER - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.
PRELUDE MUSIC: "DREAMS" BIZET
"BENEATH THE ELMS" VEON

SILENT PRAYER

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 7 "REJOICE, YE PURE IN HEART"

*ASCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN

*EXHORTATION

*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "GRACIOUS GOD, FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, YOU HAVE PROMISED TO RECEIVE US WHEN WE COME TO YOU. WE CONFESS THAT WE HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED. WE HAVE DISOBEYED YOUR LAW. WE HAVE NOT LOVED YOU OR OUR NEIGHBORS AS WE SHOULD. FORGIVE US, O GOD, AND GRANT THAT WE MAY LIVE AND SERVE YOU IN NEWNESS OF LIFE; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN."

*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN

*PRAISE

*PASTOR: 'O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.

*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE.

*DOXOLOGY No. 551

SCRIPTURE LESSON: MATTHEW 23: 13-33

HYMN No. 252 "TAKE THOU OUR MINDS, DEAR LORD"

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES' CREED)

*GLORIA PATRI

*CALL TO PRAYER

*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.

*PASTOR: LET US PRAY

*PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

BAPTISM OF INFANTS

OFFERING

OFFERTORY: "PETITE PASTORALE" CAREY

ANTHEM: "I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY" MEN'S CHORUS

SERMON: "ONLY A MOUTHPIECE!"

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 253 "TAKE MY LIFE, AND LET IT BE"

*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE: "RECESSIONAL" BAPTISTE

----- *CONGREGATION STANDING -----

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY MR. & MRS. ROLAND THOMPSON IN MEMORY OF ROLAND'S "FATHER" MR. HOWARD THOMPSON.

SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: *WALLY FEDER, JOHN SNOW, MONT MACKINNEY, JAMES MALONEY AND STEVE VARGO.

ELDER ROBERT TAIT WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL AT THE DOOR TODAY.

NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY MRS. BARBARA VARGO AND KAREN KENNEDY.

THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY WAS 264.

THE AMOUNT OF \$162 WAS COLLECTED LAST SUNDAY FOR THE AMERICAN SUNDAY - YOU CAN STILL PUT YOUR ENVELOPE IN THE COLLECTION ANY SUNDAY THIS MONTH. *CLAM 11/1/74*

HOSPITALIZED: MRS. AMELIA DREHER - BCMH; MR. EVERETT McCANDLESS - WEST PENN HOSP. PITTS; MR. LEO BALDAUF - DESHON. PAMELA SUE GRAY BORN TO MR. & MRS. DONALD EUGENE GRAY JULY 26, 1974 AND KELLY SUE MANGEL BORN TO MR. & MRS. RICHARD MANGEL ON AUG. 23, 1974 - BAPTIZED TODAY.

TUESDAY - OCT. 15 - 5:00-7:00 - SOUP AND SALAD SUPPER PLEASE HAVE ITEMS FOR THE BAZAAR TABLE IN BY MONDAY AND NO LATER THAN TUESDAY MORNING. TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM CIRCLE CHAIRMAN OR MOST ANYONE IN ONE OF THE CIRCLES.

WED. - 8:00 - GOLDEN CIRCLE - BIBLE STUDY WITH REV. LINK.

SIX (6) WOMEN ARE NEEDED FOR WHEELCHAIR AIDES AT THE DESHON FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF MONTH. CONTACT MARILYN STEPHENSON 287-7938 IF YOU CAN HELP.

MRS. LEO BALDAUF WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCH FOR THEIR PRAYERS AND CARDS AND FOR REV. LINK'S VISITS - HER HUSBAND IS A PATIENT AT DESHON.

MRS. COOPER APPRECIATED THE BIRTHDAY CARDS SHE RECEIVED LAST WEEK FOR HER BIRTHDAY AND WANTED US TO THANK YOU.

*CHURCHES IN THE BUTLER AREA ARE SPONSORING SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES TO BE HELD IN CHURCHES AND HOMES.

"KICK-OFF" SUN. WILL BE OCT. 20. NORMA KNAUER IS SMALL GROUP CAPT. FOR OUR CHURCH AND AS SUCH WILL ORGANIZE OUR PARTICIPATION.

Welcome visitors, please come back

BETTY THOMAS HAS PETIT - PLEASE SIGN.

& having continued protection of G. ~~xxxxxx~~ 2/
~~xxxxxx~~,
 "Yet they will lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the
 Lord among us? No evil can come upon us."
 Micah confronts group & passes sweep judgement on
 them all & their works and says,
 "Therefore, shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a
 field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the
 mountain of the house as the high places of the
 forest."
 He tell them Zion/which Jerus be destroyed
 This proph had nerve stand 4th & shout their natl
 shrine be complete/utterly destroyed.
 That it become like plowed ground
 All homes & what hold dear ruined,
 & most of all this an affront to think beloved
 city of Dave destroyed, & Beloved Temple as well.
 1 oft repeated assurances of priesthood & proph's,
 Jerus never destroyed.
 G mite punish peop 4 sons & rain rath on them,
 but He never destroy Temp
 Relig ldrs almost 2 man, certain Jerus never destr
 Somehow G intervege & not let happen.
 U can imag how well receiv this news was
 But M. say ~~xx~~ 4 your sake,
 Because of U this 2 happ
 U R bring about, because Of U this come pass
 Picture if will how these peop must felt, hearing
 distressing news.
 As looked beaut bldgs, wonderful city, magnif Temp
 if columns, courts/altars, & all be rubble
 Could anyone bear this burden 2 even think this
 wanton destruct?
 But we know in 586 city/temp burned
 Micahs proph came true
 and from this history U think Jewish peop learn
 from experience
 So not surpris in time Js, He lash out same think
 same kind peop
 But no need stop there/look our time/age we
 see same peop.
 In our nation sins larger cities/& sins smaller citi
 increase large percentage
 Crime rate up, immorality rampant/& sin in gen
 rage on all sides
 What a challenge set b4 xpian 2days world

"Only A Mouthpiece!"

Text: Micah 3:11,12,
 "Her heads judge for reward, and her priests teach
 for hire, and her prophets divine for money; yet
 will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the
 Lord among us? No evil can come upon us. Therefore
 shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and
 Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of
 the house as the high places of the forest."

Question: What is pharisee?
 Most wood answer "Man who observed law."
 Some wood say "men disliked/distrusted by Js & dis.
 Both correct/but in fairness really relig peop
 Is strict adher relig laws/princip/reguls is salva
 then Ph's 1st in kingdom.
 Problem they overzealous interpret letter of law
 Here they came conflict Js.
 Scrip this AM scorching denunciation these men,
 they lead many astray doomed to Hell, simply by
 their interpretation of law.
 But 8 centuries be4, nan stood B4 leaders as well
 as peop of Is & condemned 4 same things.
 Naturally he not speak same auth Js,
 but his message similar & he speak 4 G.
 Man named Micah, his message in 7 short chaps.
 In 3rd chap 11,12 vss we read, (read text)
 What Micah say it was money not princip guided leads
 in dealings.
 He refer judges accept bribes/rule in favor them
 He cater those can influence them most.
 Pr keeper sacred law & also his duty reveal it to
 peop thru words/& life
 Proph's prophesy for money,
 if person came gave money, then prophesy good
 things that person.
 They not speak truth as G reveal it, but speak
 what they want hear.
 Art of digining similar fortunetelling
 Those divined told future by cast lots, watch birds
 in flite.
 Sort of like we amuse selves by tell it hard/easy
 winter by stripes woolley worm, or by how early
 birds go south etc.
 But these peop no do amuse, but for money.
 2 compound trub, they all do under guise relig

What chance 2 speak out gainst sin/corruption, 3/
just as Js & Micah did
We cannot overcome degeneracy by remain mute
We need instead become "Mouthpieces" as were for G.

What is "Mouthpiece?"

Several definitions

Musical circles, a Mpiece is object placed on end
instr.

When instr. played help make beaut music

But if Mpiece just ~~lay~~ ^{lying} shelf/table it "Only A Mpiece"

There 1 other Mpiece we refer in life ~~IT SPEAK OF~~
& that is slang term we refer 2 in life & that lawyer
A Mpiece this case, 1 who ^{Be}pleads case of another

& this what we as xpians must [^] & should do.

cWe 2 B mpieces of G.

This what Micah was & all other proph's

We 2 B proph's, not in sense Is, Jere, Ezek, etc,
but B Mpieces in that we speak out & 4 G.

Hue & cry in nat. what wrong our country?

What happ leaders? Where we turn?

Answers 2 all quests remain each us individ

If not like what go on, (& all must agree we don't
then must speak out B herd

But again peop ask, "What can 1 person do?"

(Illustration one man in arenea)

Not many us have oppor make change in world,

But reform or reviv any kind begin 1 man.

Someone must start, & if 1 starts no know where end

1 mother Charleston W.Va, start campaign gainst
school books

Peaps we need check our system, instead ask what
wrong with kids

We can speak out by let pres, congress know what we
want & do not want.

We can go out vote 2 elect rt peop officd

Black comic Dick Gregory say, "We can decide not to
be controlled by a few degenerate men," & he right

We can use voice thru pen as well as vocal

But we need B mpieces by all we say & do.

By live closer G we show word/deed we witnesses 4 Lor
in all of life.

Let us never thinkselves be "Only A Mouthpiece" 4

we must B more than that. Anyone can B just that

unfort many xpians just this. ~~ONLY A MOUTHPIECE~~

G. needs each & every 1 speak out/witness 4 Lord
all areas life.

Let us insted each b that mpiece makes us instr 4 G.

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
 Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
 Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.